

*Your Visit With the...*

# AMISH

IN THE ARTHUR AND ARCOLA AREA



*History of the Only Amish Settlement in Illinois*

Edited and Published by Elvan N. Yoder of Rockome Gardens

50¢

## *foreword . . .*

OUR FRIENDS and visitors who call to see us day after day at Rockome Gardens ask so many questions about these neighbors of ours . . . where are they from . . . what are their habits and customs . . . what is their religion . . . their beliefs, and dozens of other questions. In the pages that follow we have tried to answer these questions in a short pictorial history.

Most of the Amish live and work on farms in the Arthur, Chesterville, Arcola area. Most of the results of their labor are found on our tables and in the stores all over our land. Some work in our factories and other industries also, just as they did in Lancaster, Pa., before migrating westward.

When you visit in the Arthur area and at Rockome Gardens, you will want to drive through the Amish community, the only such settlement in Illinois. This book is dedicated to a better understanding of these Amish people.

**ELVAN N. YODER**  
ROCKOME GARDENS



Two Amish men  
enjoy a visit on the  
streets in Arthur.



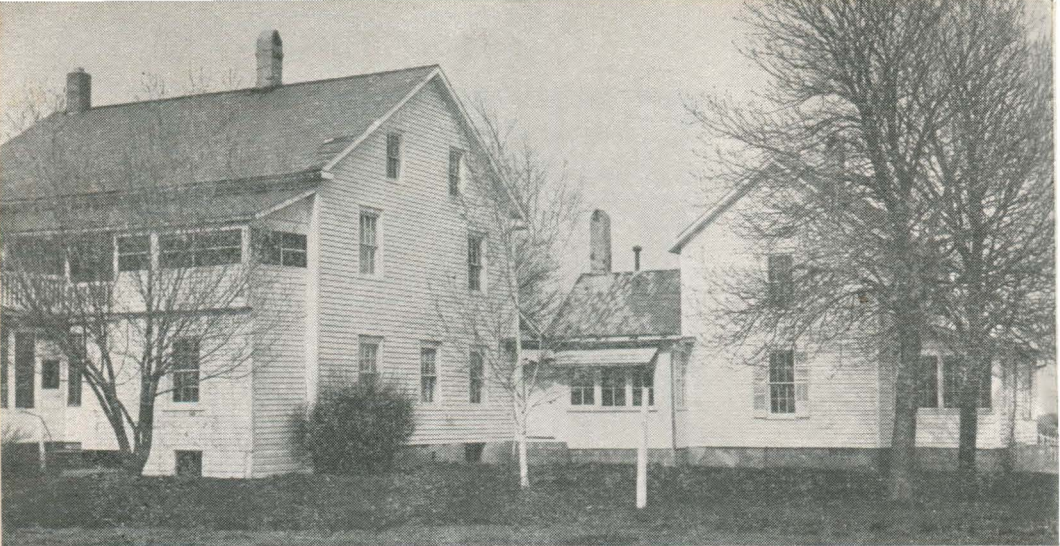
# THE AMISH

*... in the Arthur and Arcola Area*

**P**ICTURE yourself as a "wayfarin' stranger" in a strange land. You have just eased your automobile into the main street of Arthur, Illinois, or you have just driven through the countryside for a visit at Rockome Gardens.

For the first time you have seen groups of horses and buggies . . . at a hitch rack in town . . . or gathered at a home as you drove through the countryside. You see several oddly dressed people walking along the street or roadway. The men are dressed in blue and wear broad-brimmed hats. But you don't notice their clothing at first. Instead, you stare a little pop-eyed at the luxurious beard covering each adult male face.

The women alongside look like portraits out of the family album, only more so—full length skirts, blue bonnets and shawls. And the youngsters, trailing behind, look like miniatures of the elders—in dress at least.



*A spacious Amish home, left, with "Grandpa" house at right.*

You park your car with the determination to find out what all this is about. In a short time you begin piecing the story together, and this is what you learn:

**T**HE PEOPLE you saw are known as Amish. About 2,500 of them live in the Arthur vicinity on farms, more than half of them in an area south of Arthur reaching as far as Rockome Gardens. They own a great deal of farm land, and one of their basic creeds is that a member should make his living from the soil.

When did the Amish sect organize—for it is a religious group—and why did its members settle near Arthur? Soon you learn the history.

The Amish faith had its start in Switzerland, and was founded by Jacob Amen of Amenthal. He and a small number of people became dissatisfied with the worldliness of the parent Mennonite Church. It was their wish to live a more strict and simple life; therefore they formed together as a group who rejected wars, materialism and frivolity.

The sect came to America with other Europeans during the eighteenth century. Like the Mennonites, who trace their beginning to Menno Simon, a former Catholic priest who led a group of dissenters out of the church in the closing stages of



the Reformation in 1632, the Amish came to America to seek religious freedom.

They arrived in Pennsylvania in the year 1709. Eight years later a large number moved to Lancaster County in Pennsylvania, joining the Mennonites and Dunkards already settled there.

### **"CHURCH" VS. "HOUSE" AMISH**

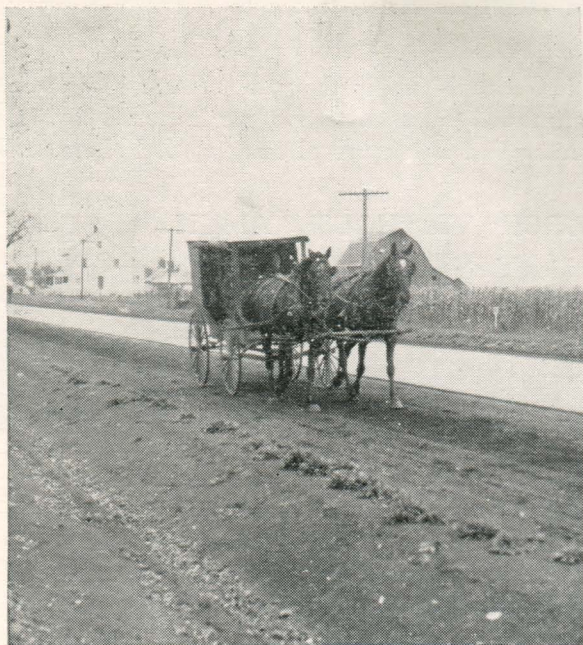
Soon after making their new home in Pennsylvania, a problem arose in the Amish Church. The members were divided among themselves on the question of where to hold their worship service.

The Conservatives, known as "Church Amish" favored having a central church building. Descendants of this order have in recent years come to accept the doctrines of the "Dort Confession" in a less severe form, and are almost reunited with the Mennonite Church. These doctrines were expressed in the "Declaration of Faith" at Dort, Holland, in 1632 and are accepted by most Mennonites of America.

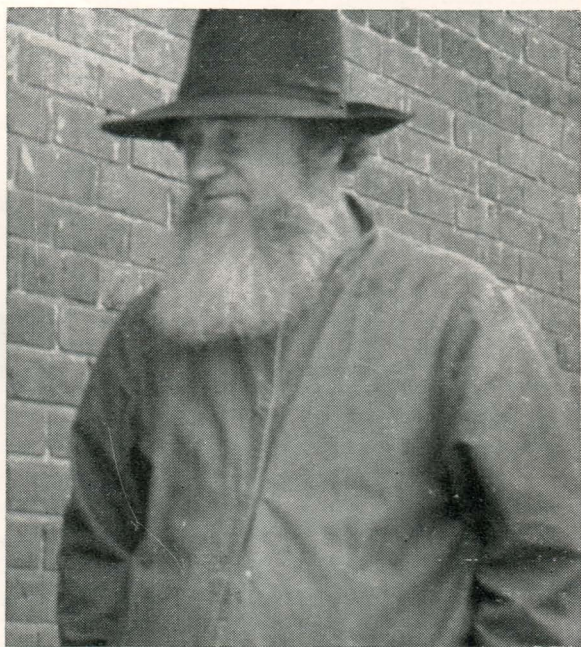
The Old Order, known as "House Amish," favor having the service held in a home. The order was organized in 1865, and was made up of those who wanted to continue accepting the strictness of the "Dort Confession" doctrine of long ago. The people around the Arthur, Rockome area are House Amish.

*A typical  
Amish horse  
and buggy.*





*A scene along State  
Route 133 where  
the state maintains  
a road for "Old  
Dobbin" as well as  
for the modern  
automobile.*



*A blue jacket,  
broad-brimmed hat,  
and beard typical of  
the Amish man's  
attire.*





*An Amish family strolls along the business section of Arthur on a shopping trip into town.*

**T**HE AMISH were very contented with their new home in America until 1850. After the Civil War, due to a shortage of land, a great many of them decided to move west, and eventually settled in Illinois, Ohio, Indiana and Canada. In the United States today there are about fifty Amish settlements and 27,000 adults.

In 1865 the first group of Amish came to Arthur. Today this community is the only group in Illinois that has kept the Old Order Amish Way of life and is probably the purest Amish society known today. Lancaster County in Pennsylvania still is considered the Mother Community of the Amish. The people at Arthur still speak the idiomatic German language with its softer overtone of French often referred to as the "Pennsylvania Dutch."

### THE AMISH HOME

The Amish homes are easily identified. They are large rectangular frame or stone block structures with the inevitable cluster of smaller buildings nearby. At the rear of many homes is a small frame house known as the "Grandpa House"—so



named because the elders move there after their children are married and assume management of the farm.

As you approach one of the Amish homes you will be impressed by the general appearance of cleanliness. As you knock at the front door—doorbells are not used—you will have a close-up of the rather stern architecture of the house. The Amish woman you will meet probably will present a softer countenance than you expected, and she certainly will be smiling.

You will be invited inside without hesitation. "Inside" means the parlor, the most sumptuous room of the Amish home, if such an expansive word can be applied. Its only adornments consist of a small rug in the middle of the room, plain cloth window curtains, upholstered furniture, straight chairs, and a hickory bough rocker.

**Y**OU MIGHT decide, though, that the simplicity of the room harmonizes with the appearance of your hostess. You would especially observe her total lack of make-up, the small white lawn cap drawn tightly to the back of her head (the prayer cap is worn because the Amish interpret the Bible liter-



*A typical Amish family leaving their home for a trip into town.*





*A young Amish man plows with a six-horse hitch. Most of the Amish field work is done by horse power.*

ally), plain dress, ankle length, black stockings, and high flat-heeled black leather shoes. You would learn that a heavy well-made black shawl is worn during winter months, that a black bonnet is worn outside the home, that straight pins instead of buttons or zippers keep the clothing in place.

Amish women make all the clothing they wear except the shawl, shoes and hose. They do most all their sewing in January and February, making all clothing that their families will wear for the following year.

Amish girls dress almost exactly like their mothers, except for the prayer cap, symbol of church membership. Only adults are permitted to join the Amish Church, the view being that each person should be fully convinced in his own mind that he wants to accept the principles of the faith.

### **DRESS OF MEN SIMPLE**

Men of the faith also dress in simple style. They wear dark colored high vests over home-made shirts, collarless coats fastened with hooks and eyes (which explains the nickname, "Hook and Eye Amish"); heavy jackets or overcoats if the weather is cold; black shoes; and flat, wide-brimmed hats.



*Two Amish families  
stop for a chat upon  
a visit into town.*

On Sunday the Amish men wear white shirts. No caps, belts, sweaters, or colored neckties are worn. All men wear their hair long in the familiar "Dutch Bob." Their beards are luxurious but moustaches are not condoned. Young Amish men shave until they are married.

All Amish attend church, and a Sunday service of the Old Order lasts about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours. On Communion Sundays church may last from morning to night, using several ministers.

Church property consists of hymn books, and plain benches. They do not have benevolent societies or missionaries. The songs they sing are those of the Swiss brethren of 1571, and the tunes, supposed to be the original, have never been recorded. Musical instruments are never used in church or as other entertainment. Ministers receive no salary and must work for a living as others do. Sermons are simple and extemporaneous.

**G**ETTING back to the visual aspects of your visit, you will observe that the parlor of all homes can be joined with the dining room and other rooms simply by sliding two panels. This provides one large room where religious services may be held to accommodate many worshippers.



As you walk through various rooms you may begin to notice the absence of conveniences common to most homes. Telephones, electric lights and furnaces are almost never seen. Outsiders think the religion of the Amish ban these appliances, but another factor probably is more important. Leaders of the sect regard the telephone as a needless expense and a time waster (what is so rare as the housewife who does not spend many minutes every day chatting over the telephone). Electricity, too, is an unnecessary expense, say the Amish; furnaces are expensive because most people heat more rooms than they use.

For practical as well as religious reasons, Amish people frown upon the use of automobiles. From long experience the Amish conclude that Old Dobbin, even if much slower, will "get them there and bring them back." Also, the automobile is one of the greatest levelers of all man-made inventions. That is, it tends to standardize people—a trend the Amish fear in the belief that it would destroy their religion.

Gasoline driven machines such as used to grind grain and pump water are permitted, however, on the ground that they contribute to efficiency and save time. It is paradoxical that the Amish are eager to adopt new methods which contribute to better farming but refuse to accept innovations which would change their personal living habits.

*Getting ready for a trip to town by horse and buggy.*



## DILEMMA ON EDUCATION

Their views on education provide a good example of this dilemma. Students are generally not tallowed to progress beyond the eighth grade. The Amish explain that when a boy has reached that period in life he is ready to begin full time farm work and can be extremely useful to the family. The girl of that age should help her mother and learn how to become a good housewife.

While this is a logical explanation, there can be little doubt that the elders fear exposure to high school associations may weaken the ties to the Amish faith. This viewpoint on education often conflicts with state law which requires children to attend school until the age of sixteen.

**A**S A VISITOR, your hostess would want to show you the kitchen—the real working area of the Amish home. Here the Amish mother bakes the pastries for which she is famous and prepares the bountiful meals served in most Amish homes. If you stay for dinner you will begin to understand what people mean when they say that a table “literally sags” under



*A view of the  
Amish hitch racks  
in Arthur.*



*Amish men wear their hair long in the familiar "Dutch Bob" being received here at the hands of his wife.*



the burden of food. It is not uncommon for several different meats to be served at one meal, not to mention an assortment of salads, vegetables and pastries.

If you are visiting the Amish late in the fall, you may be treated to a fairly commonplace sight at that time of the year. You may see a young couple riding from house to house in a buggy.

These young people would be planning to marry and are driving through the countryside inviting their friends and relatives to attend the wedding. The young man usually quits work about two weeks before the marriage, and he and his bride-to-be devote the time to inviting people to the ceremony.

### ALL DAY WEDDING

An Amish wedding is something of an endurance contest. Festivities begin shortly after 8 a.m. and continue all day and late into the night. The marriage ceremony is held at high noon,



*Amish girls viewing a baseball game during recess at school.*

after which a real banquet is served. Games are played in the afternoon, then another banquet is served. But this time the older folks have started homeward and the young people arrive to dominate the evening celebration. More games are played and the guests tell stories, usually of a humorous nature.

**T**HE AMISH do not believe in honeymoon trips, the young couple merely retire to the bridegroom's home. Divorces are not tolerated, but re-marriage almost always follows in the event of death of either partner.

Every Amish father hopes to give his son and daughter-in-law a tract of land when they begin life together. This was a common practice in the early days when land was plentiful, but the surplus acreage has long since disappeared and a great number of young people now settle down with their elders to help farm the homestead.

The presence of two or more families on one farm apparently does not lead to undue friction. All members seem congenial and vest authority in the eldest male. Their religion is paramount and any real misunderstandings are referred to the ministers.



These leaders are chosen by lot—a procedure recommended in the Bible, according to Amish interpretation.

## INTEGRITY OF SPOKEN WORD

A cardinal teaching in the Amish religion is the integrity of the spoken word. So basic is this tenet that they would rather not sign any written farm leases, etc., and are reluctant to take any type of oath.

They never carry insurance, even when land is bought on finance through a government agency. Their own "insurance" company is considered one of the best in the world. It works in this way:

**W**HENEVER A fellow member's building is destroyed, steps are taken immediately by neighbors to replace it. They meet and determine how much lumber will be needed, appoint some member to buy it, and then begin erection as soon as possible.

Such co-operative action is carried into other aspects of their living. For instance, not a single Amish man has been on relief, according to reports, although cases of distress were not uncommon during the worst of the depression years in the 1930's.

*A group of Amish boys pose following a baseball game, their favorite sport at school.*







*A one-room school  
attended by Amish  
children still in  
operation in the  
Arthur area.*

A great deal has been written and said about the Amish view on the war. They are considered ultra-pacifists and during World War I ranked as conscientious objectors. In World War II many volunteered for regular service and received decorations. But again a large percentage were C.O.'s. They gave generously, however, to the Red Cross and bond drives.

### MANY DESERT FARMS

At one time, before the land shortage, the Amish did not sanction members working in business establishments or otherwise deserting the farm. Now a large canning factory is owned and operated by Amish people near Arthur. They sell thousands of cans of vegetables each year to one of the largest chain groceries, in addition to retailing to their neighbors.

Numerous individual farmers have their own canning machinery and devote considerable land to truck gardening. Others do watch and clock repairing, one makes harness and others have blacksmith shops. Several Amish men work in Progress Manufacturing Company at Arthur, several work at Wingler Harvest-Craft Kitchens, Inc., in Arcola. Several work as contractors and craftsmen in the building trades where they are considered good workmen.



More than 500 Mennonites live among the Amish in the Arthur-Rockome area. They drive automobiles, have their own central church building in Arthur and near Chesterville where all meetings are held and dress like all non-Amish.

**I**T SEEMS appropriate that the Amish are known far and wide as the "Plain People"—rebels against the tinsel and hypocrisy of the world. Their philosophy can be summed up in a paraphrase of a line from The Rubaiyat by Omar Khayyan—"A loaf of bread, an acre of land, and thou"—meaning food, farm, and family.

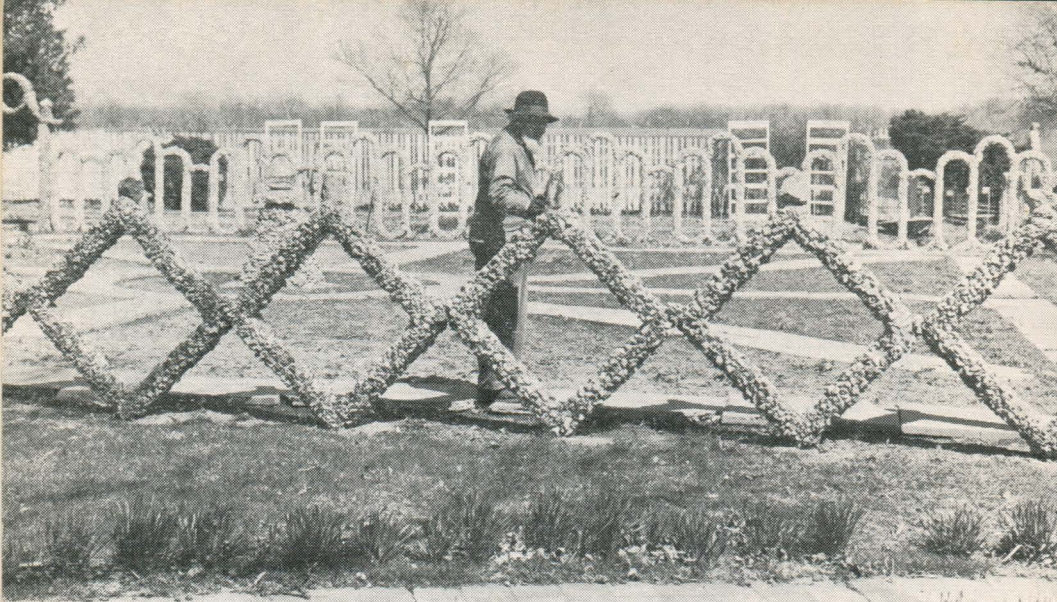
Perhaps this system is, as some maintain, a "ridiculous, old-fashioned hangover from the Middle Ages." But in general, it works and gives these people a better than average financial return and a good measure of personal happiness.

In a modern society of never ending scientific discoveries, the Amish still live their primitive but simple life of peace, quietness and contentment.

*Amish students  
on the porch  
of a rural  
school.*







A few of the Amish work off of the farm as this man at Rockome Gardens.

# ROCKOME

*... Intricate Rockwork, Beautiful Flowers*

**R**OCKOME IS the name given to the former country home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Martin of Arthur, Illinois. It is located seven miles southeast of Arthur, five miles west of Arcola and two and a half miles south of Chesterville, Illinois. On a farm of 208 acres devoted to livestock raising, seven acres have been set aside for flowers, gardens, homes and barns. On five acres of this sets the modern log cabin, cottage and the summer home formerly used by the Martins, among the century old shellbark hickory trees. The work of beautifying the gardens has been going on each summer since 1937. Four beautiful entrances, each massive and different in its rock work, flowers and evergreens, lead into Rockome.

All grounds, gardens and plots are fenced with unique types of fences built in unusual designs of natural rock inlaid in concrete. These fences are formed into panels and scrolls, in many varied designs, and the natural hue of rocks blends beau-



tifully with the varicolored flowers. Hundreds of tons of rock are on this farm, gathered as boulders and niggerheads from the surrounding farms and broken by hand on the place.

The oldest garden on north side is known as the "Sunken Gardens" and contains about one-fourth acre of mostly annual blooming flowers of many colors and types. Half of the garden is from three to five feet below the surrounding part, hence the given name.

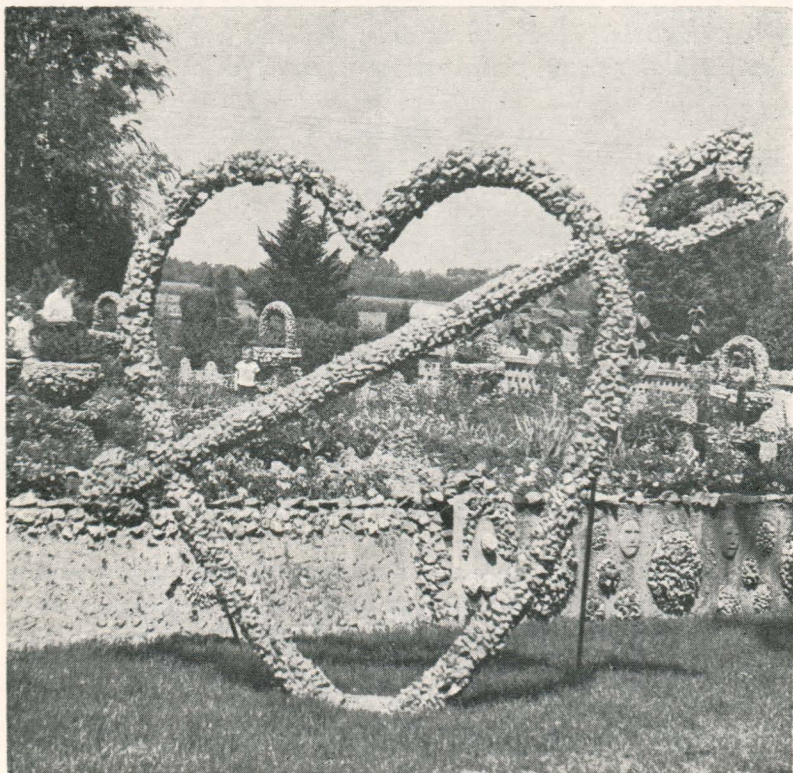
**T**HEN THERE is the perennial garden of equal size, containing among many other plants 50 different Iris, 25 different Peonies, and equal numbers of Phlox, Oriental Poppies, Chrysanthemums, Delphinium, Daisies, and many lesser flowers blooming every year. Also 100 novelty rose bushes are in bloom from June till after frost each Fall.

From there one naturally wanders through appropriately designed gates of the Old Mission Patio, which is designed after the grounds of the Southwestern and Mexican Missions and schools, even to the windows, bells, etc. In this patio is the cactus and Mexican garden where hardy and tender cacti, succulent plants, many colored Mexican flowers and desert flowers grow.

*Two Amish merchants  
service a tiller  
at Herschberger's  
Small Engine Service  
four miles west  
of Arcola.*







*This rock heart and arrow is one of hundreds of unusual rock designs at Rockome Gardens. One of the beautiful flower gardens can be seen in the background surrounded by rock wall.*

There are now over 15 different kinds of cacti in this plot. Rock garden life is also abundant here. Only a step away is the fernery and begonia garden where colorful begonias of various kinds vie with the stately majesty of green fern leaves to show their beauty. There are over 10 hardy native American ferns growing here in this man-made garden, beside 75 blooming begonias.

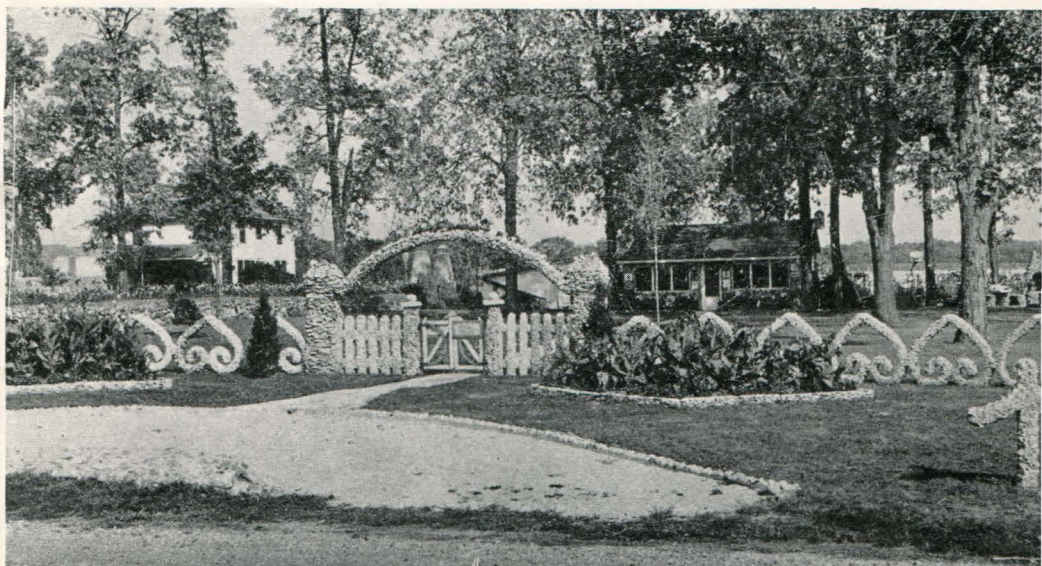
Occupying part of adjoining space not taken by the beautiful annuals is the novelty and guess garden. Here growing are between 50 and 100 novelty plants, and plant life of which we all use but seldom see. Names of them are hidden and the fun of trying to recognize them is not even surpassed by quiz programs.



Next is one of our experimental gardens and small greenhouse used for early spring starting plants. These gardens are where we grow our new stock to replenish our beds and here you may see any type growing, the amount and kind and type changing yearly. There are always new kinds of tulips, narcissus, gladioli, chrysanthemums, dahlias, cannas, etc., growing here in large beds. Now here we grow over 75 different named dahlias, 75 named gladioli and over 100 different chrysanthemums every year. The novelty of paths and flower beds of concrete where a visitor can walk and see any day of year or any weather is surely somewhat different.

OUR FIRST VIEW upon entering Rockome is the water or pool garden where one-half acre is given to 35 pools of various sizes and shapes budding with water lilies, water plants, and alive with different kinds of fish. Paths, restful settees, among trees, on water's edge and on islands among the flowers help to add to the beauty of this place. Rising to the west side of this is the flowering man-made hill and observation tower. A mass of color, a source of fragrance, a thing of beauty, you wind your way up among rocks and flowers to the top, where you view the entire panorama. Looking west from the hill is the undeveloped grove of many kinds of blooming trees for shade and

*A summer cabin nestles among the beautiful flowers and magnificent stonework in a section of Rockome Gardens*



CABIN ENTRANCE "ROCKOME" ARCOLA ILL.





*An Amish hitchrack  
in Arthur maintained  
by the Amish  
and merchants.*

beauty—young, but developing fast. To the north is the site of our extensive rose gardens. Here bloom over 90 hybrid T roses of various types and colors all through the summer. There are the regular old reliables and the newer beauties also. As years go by the parade of beauty roses are for your enjoyment. Be sure to see them often.

*The pagoda entrance to Rockome is a beautiful rock structure surrounded by flowers which visitors from every part of the country flock to see.*



*PAGODA ENTRANCE "ROCKOME" ARCOLA ILL.*





*PATIO & CHAPEL "ROCKOME" ARCOLA ILL.*

*The patio and chapel built of rock, surrounded by colorful flowers, is a beautiful feature for most visitors at Rockome Gardens.*

Also from year to year the flower beds are changed and new faces appear among our flowers. Each summer brings many new large dahlias and many nationally known gladioli to show their beauty at Rockome.

**T**HIS ELABORATE setup was built and was kept up by the Martins for their own enjoyment and pleasure for many years. So many friends and neighbors, however, from miles around began to call at Rockome on days in summer, to be followed in the years to come by hundreds and thousands from miles around, that Rockome Gardens literally became a tourist attraction because of its sheer beauty and interesting novelties which brought joy to those who viewed them.

From the earliest Spring when more than 1,000 Tulips bloom till the fall, colored by thousands of chrysanthemums and dahlia blossoms, Rockome hangs out its welcome sign to any and all who enjoy the rugged beauty of rocks, the color and fragrance of flowers without money or price. You are always welcome; because of this we can give and give and give and still have more left for other fellow travelers in this world. Your only admission is our own enjoyment.

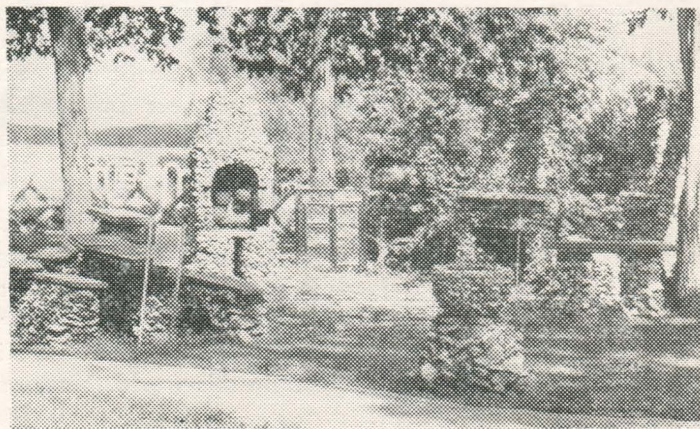




*A favorite of the kids is this surrey which operates at Rockome Gardens*

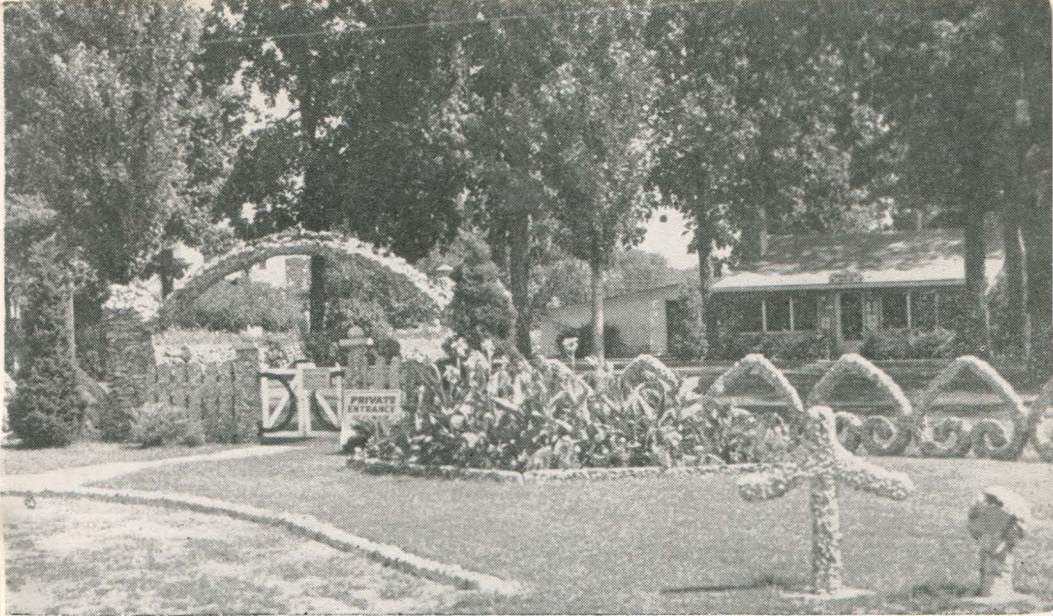
And our money we spent to make this place of enjoyment for us is merely our donation to your happiness to make us both forget war, strife, jealousy, death and destruction. We hope you enjoy it as much as we have enjoyed the building and upkeep of it, and if so, we are satisfied.

In 1950 Mr. and Mrs. Martin gave Rockome to the Board of Charities of the Mennonite Church. It was intended to build small cottages there for retired missionaries, but after two were built the program was found to be unsatisfactory. It was decided to sell the farm and gardens and donate a portion of the money to the Community Nursing Home in Arthur. We purchased Rockome in August, 1958, and plan to operate it along the same lines as did the Martins.



*Unusual rock designs such as these abound at Rockome.*





*A study in rocks, trees and flowers at Rockome Gardens.*

FROM EARLY SPRING until late in the Fall visitors will enjoy the fragrance of acres of varied-colored flowers as well as the rugged beauty of the rocks. There are dozens of pool gardens, paths, restful settees, an Old Mission Patio, Cactus and Mexican Gardens, etc., which you will enjoy.

*One of the unusual entrances of intricate stonework at Rockome*



*ENTRANCE GATE "ROCKOME" ARCOLA ILL.*





WE ARE GLAD that you can be with us today . . . we hope you can come again soon. We hope your friends can also come and enjoy our home . . . the flowers and rockwork, and at home next winter we hope you get this little booklet out and review our offering to world happiness . . . And do come again.

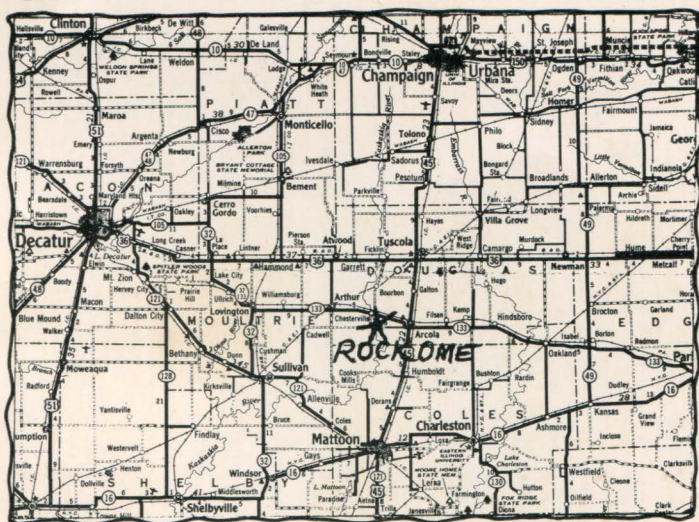
. . . THE YODERS





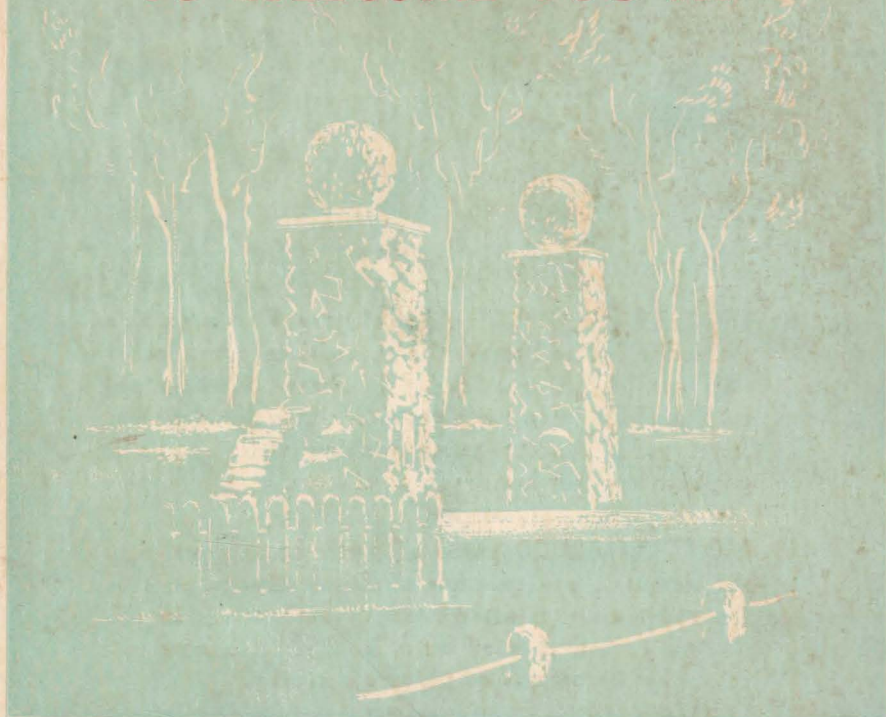
BEAUTIFUL COLONIAL columns dominate this residence located amid the more than seven acres of beautiful rock gardens of Rockome. Century old shell bark hickory trees provide shade for spacious front yard. An intriguing wishing well is also a popular stop for hundreds of visitors.

MORE THAN 20 years of work have gone into the dramatic presentation of the Rockome, one of the most unusual attractions of rock work in the United States. Started as a hobby, it is now enjoyed by thousands of visitors annually.



*Permit Us . . .*

**TO WELCOME YOU AT**



# ROCKOME

**NEAR ARCOLA and ARTHUR, ILLINOIS**

Rockome is located half-way between Arthur and Arcola on Route 133 and 2½ miles south of Chesterville. It is only 20 miles from Mattoon, 35 miles from Decatur, 40 miles from Champaign, 130 miles from Indianapolis, 150 miles from St. Louis, and 185 miles from Chicago. (See Map Inside Cover)

**Located Near the Only Amish Community in Illinois**